No. 58

# The REDEMPTION of Marie Gordon

THE TRAGIC STORY OF WRONGED WOMANHOOD

Price 10¢

Her mind was made up to one thing. She herself would see to it that she had the proper care during the trying period that was fast approaching.

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THE STORK had announced his coming in the near future to Mr. and Mrs. Harold Wayne. Betty Wayne, looking forward to this event, was far from cheerful and happy, for she was well aware of her husband's business reverses.

She had seen her husband brood night after night. And every time she offered her advice, or help; every time she wanted to comfort him, he shoved her roughly aside.

Many a night she went to bed and cried herself to sleep. It was not because her husband openly accused her of unfaithfulness.

It was because he showed his distrust in every action and he constantly made insinuations that cut her to the core.

One evening she went to him as he was seated alone in the library. He was looking over some papers.

"Harold," she began, as she took a seat at his side, "you and I must come to a better understanding. This way of living is killing me by inches. I can't stand it much longer."

"What is the matter now?" he demanded.

"We are drifting apart, dear," she said, her voice aquiver.

"Nonsense, Betty. You——"

"Yes, we are," she insisted. "And you are financially embarrassed at a time when we need several hundred dollars for—for the coming of the baby. I can not go to the hospital with practically nothing."

He looked past her out of the window.

"I know it," Wayne admitted glumly.

"You must let me help you," the unhappy wife went on. "There is one man who is always willing to assist us. Shall I go to Mr. Jamison?"

Something like a stifled oath escaped his lips.

"Don't you dare!" he thundered.

"Why not, Harold?"

He made a vehement gesture with his hand.

"But something will have to be done," Betty continued in the quiet, gentle tone she always employed when arguing with her husband. "I shall have to go to the hospital. That, will be expensive. Then there will be a doctor's fee."

"Yes, I know all that," he remarked, turning away from her. "But I can meet all of these bills without help from a man like Jamison. I can't understand why you always mention his name."

He turned suddenly and faced her, his eyes flickering suspiciously.

"Have you seen him lately?" he demanded.

"Not for weeks, Harold," the young wife retorted, refusing to lose her temper. "Not since you forbid me to——"

"I know I did," he interrupted irascibly. "But I am not so sure that you are always telling me the truth where this man is concerned."

For a long moment she gazed at him, a tear glistening at her lashes.

"Don't you — don't you trust me?" Betty asked falteringly as if the words cost her a painful effort.

He ignored the question.

"Don't you trust me?"

"If I don't it is your own fault," he burst out at last.

"My fault?"

"Yes."

"Why, Harold."

"Because you lied to me about Jamison," he told her roughly.

"I lied to you?" her voice was choked with tears.

"Yes, you did, Betty. You told me a moment ago that you had not seen Jamison for weeks. That is not true. A certain person living in this very building saw you get in his automobile not more than a week ago."

Betty's face paled, then turned crimson.

"That is a deliberate falsehood," she cried.

"It is nothing of the kind. It is true. I know it."

She stared at him, aghast.

"Harold Wayne, you are a brute and a fool," she said with no trace of excitement. "So far as I am personally concerned, I have ceased to care. But you are doing Mr. Jamison a rank injustice. He has made no attempt to see me since the night you insulted him in your own home.

"You made it very plain to him that he was not a welcome visitor and you humiliated me in his presence. He never came back and——"

"I did not want him to come back!" the husband snarled. "That is the reason why I made it so damned plain. Now I don't want to hear another word about this man. I'll take care of you without his help. And I'll repeat, I don't ever want to see him in this house again."

Betty made an impatient gesture and rose.

As she stood at the window she watched her husband furtively through the corners of her eyes, wondering what he was going to say next.

When he remained silent she said:

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Harold?"

"I am not. Why?" he flared back.

"I'll tell you why." She came a few steps closer and met his angry glance without flinching. "You have deeply offended the best friend you ever had. And you offended him without cause. That was cowardly when he only meant to be kind to both of us."

Wayne laughed harshly.

"Rubbish!" he snorted.

"Very well, have your way," the wife retorted icily. "But I want you to know this—you can't kill my respect and feeling of friendship for Mr. Jamison. I wish to God you had some of his fine character——"

He sprang up and faced her, a wicked glint in his eyes.

"You dare—you dare?" he flamed.

"I dare tell you the truth, Harold Wayne," Betty replied unafraid. "Now strike me if you want to. I think you are quite capable of it, you jealous fool."

For a few seconds it looked as if Wayne meant to use violence. Very slowly he turned and sat down again.

The strain of the quarrel was beginning to tell on Betty. The pallor in her cheeks had turned to a sickly white.

Suddenly she collapsed on the chair and began to weep as through her heart was breaking.

For a time her husband paid no attention to her. But when she showed signs of becoming hysterical he rose quickly and went to her side.

"There—there now," he murmured, his manner changed. "I did not mean to be nasty, Betty. Let's forget it."

She did not lift her head but continued to weep.

"I guess you were right," Wayne admitted ruefully. "I am a jealous fool. I wish I could overcome it. But I love you so dearly that I am always afraid that some day I am going to lose you."

Betty lifted her face to his.

"You will never lose me so long as you are kind to me," she said, her lips drooping pathetically at the corners. "But I can not continue living with you if you talk like you did a little while ago.

"I have never crossed you in a single thing since we were married. If you are fair you will admit that.

"So far as Mr. Jamison is concerned, I will not be influenced by you or anyone else. I can swear to you upon my hope of Heaven that he has never uttered a single word, or made a single move that could be construed as dishonorable. He has always been kindness itself."

Harold Wayne winced.

This declaration coming from the lips of his wife was gall to him.

"Very well," he remarked ungraciously. "Let the question drop. But I believe you and I would be happier together if he were about ten thousand miles away."

She looked at him for a moment, and forced a smile.

"Harold," she said gently, "you are a big man in many ways. But the biggest thing you can do is to put aside your unreasonable jealousy. Try it, won't you?"

"I'll try," he replied, but it was only half a promise, as his manner indicated.

As Betty left him and went to her room, she was not at all satisfied with the result of her interview with her husband.

She knew that if she had persisted in speaking of Mr. Jamison, it would have led to another and perhaps a worse quarrel.

The future did not look particularly bright. She suspected that Harold was in far worse financial straits than he cared to admit.

Her mind was made up to one thing. She herself would see to it that she had the proper care during the trying period that was fast approaching.

The following day her husband seemed rather more cheerful than he had been for many weeks. Neither of them went back to the subject which had precipitated

a quarrel the night before.

Nor did they allude to it during the days which came in rapid succession.

Wayne seemed entirely submerged in his fast failing business. There were some outstanding bills which he collected. But the amount was barely sufficient to defray expenses to come.

In the meantime his wife went about quietly making the necessary preparations for this most important event.

And she did it without consulting her husband. Fortunately he did not pry into her affairs, for had he done so there might have been more trouble.

As the physician to wait on her she selected Dr. Hamilton, a close and personal friend of Mr. Jamison.

At the approach of the fateful period she went to the hospital where she became the mother of a beautiful baby girl.

## Chapter 190

## THE DISTRUST

O UNDERSTAND the world is better than to condemn it. To study the world is better than to abuse it. And to make the world better, lovelier and happier is the noblest work of any man or woman. Mr. Jamison, the New York millionaire, was trying to do that very thing since his miraculous reformation brought about through his meeting with Betty.

And he was making a sacrifice no one knew anything about but himself. He denied himself the great joy he might have had, for Betty had been close to loving him once upon a time.

But firmly believing that she had given her heart to a younger man, he stepped back and encouraged them both.

To make the world a better place to live in, was his sole aim. To make the young wife and mother as happy as circumstances would allow, he considered his duty, for had she not shown him the path to honor and truth?

And now, that Betty had once more assumed the leadership in the household, he wanted her to feel that his kindly interest in her had not slackened since the coming of the baby.

He sent her a beautiful white crib, which Betty received with an exclamation of deep appreciation, and her husband stared at with a dark scowl.

When she noticed this she was ready to burst into tears. She retained her self-control with an effort.

The hope that the arrival of the baby would bring

Harold closer to her was a sad disappointment. It seemed that his jealousy had been fanned into a new blaze.

He showed it plainly in his manner toward her, and more than once he made a slurring remark about Mr. Jamison she resented hotly.

One afternoon after having taken the baby for an airing in the park, she returned home a little later than usual. She found her husband standing in the sitting room with a frown on his face.

He did not greet her as an affectionate husband might have done. He stared at her and asked harshly:

"Where have you been, Betty?"

The bright color in her cheeks and the evident mother joy in her eyes, seemed all at once to his jealous-ridden brain things of strange significance. Everything was susnicious to him.

"Where have you been?" he repeated abruptly.

She had taken a step forward, but halted at his abrupt challenge and stared wonderingly into his sullen eyes.

"Why?" she queried. "What is the matter? Have you been wanting me for anything particular? I know I am a little late."

He regarded her with a peculiar glance.

His gaze traveled from her gloriously auburn hair over her slightly disarranged dress to her silk-stockings and trim ankles.

"Where have you been," he demanded once more. "And with whom have you been?"

"I have been in the park," she replied. "I had some shopping to do and I walked through——"

"Were you alone?" he cut her short.

"Of course. Why? I had the baby out for a little while——"

"You were alone then?" His continued stare made her nervous.

"Why, Harold," she assayed to laugh. "Are you allowing your foolish jealousy to get the best of you again. You talk like a jealous husband in a cheap melodrama."

"Is that so?" he sneered. "On the stage a jealous husband is generally farcical. In real life it is different. And we are in real life, you and I, my wife."

"Harold," she cried, annoyed by the rough manner that underlay his speech. "What in the world is the matter now?"

"That is what I intend to find out. Sit down."

Betty advanced a step.

"Have you—have you been drinking, Harold?"

"No, I wish I had," came back.

"Why——" he silenced her with:

"Sit down, Betty. There are some things that must be cleared."

"If it is about—about the money?" she began.

"Money?" he snorted. "No, this is something real."

A sigh of relief slipped over her lips.

In her husband's jealous eyes was a look of cunning. He took a firm grip on his temper and forced himself to speak calmly.

"Betty," he began, "last night you told me that no one paid your expenses in the hospital. When you told me that with all the sincerity of an honest woman, I believed you."

"Yes," she whispered.

"This morning you told me again that you had not seen that man Jamison for months. I believed that—that is—I wanted to believe it."

"Of course, Harold. But why——"

"Later to-day I found out that a man had paid all your expenses in the hospital. I still believed——"

"What on earth are you talking about?" she inquired. "You say a man paid——"

"Then," the husband went on with the same dangerous calm, as he crossed to his desk and pulled out the sheaf of canceled checks, "I found this."

There could be no doubt now as to the change in Betty's expression.

There was no need for her husband's jealousy to magnify it. Her face had suddenly lost its color, and her big blue eyes grew wide in fear.

Oddly enough, her look of terror did not add to his white rage.

While the swift change in her confirmed his wildest suspicion, it filled him with something akin to pity. She seemed so small and pitiful in her dread.

"Well?" she said, faltering defiantly.

"Betty," he spoke, his steady voice softening into grieved gentleness. "Why have you done this thing?"

"What, Harold?"

"Why have you ruined my life and yourself? And above all, why have you played the hypocrit so long with me?"

"I have not been a hypocrit!" she blazed. "It was no concern of yours. What I did I had a right to do. And what is more, I would do it again a thousand times over."

He seemed staggered by her outburst.

"Had a right to do?" he stammered, unbelieving. Then pity was swallowed in fury at her self-justification. "Oh, you are shameless! You are more vile than I thought any woman could be. And with such innocent eyes as you have.

"And now you stand there and tell me that you

had a right to deceive me——"

"I didn't deceive you!" Betty flamed.

"Don't add any more lies, woman," Wayne shouted, raising his hand as if about to strike her. "What do you take me for, eh? I am neither a child nor a fool. I know you now for what you are."

He turned away in disgust.

"Harold Wayne!" she cried, chokingly. "I have stood much from you, more, I suppose, than most decent men's wives are called on to stand in a lifetime. But I won't be told that I am shameless and that I lie just because I let Mr. Jamison help you."

"Help me?" the husband almost screamed. "Good God."

"Yes, help you. I got the money from him to—to——"

"To defray your hospital bills? Without telling me and even without giving me the least consideration as to whether I approved of it or not!" Wayne was lashing himself into a new fury. "What kind of a woman are you to ask outsiders for money?"

"You are wrong as usual, you jealous fool," the wife retorted. "Mr. Jamison had nothing to do with the hospital bills. There were no such hospital bills. I have told you that before."

He viewed her scornfully for a moment.

"The superintendent of the hospital told me today that there were, Betty. And he told me also that a man paid them. I still was fool enough to believe your bare word ahead of my own senses. Then I found this voucher——"

"The superintendent told you a man paid my bills there?" she gasped. "What are you saying?"

"Please don't keep up this silly pretense any longer," he scoffed. "The next thing you'll be pretend-

ing ignorance of this check."

"I don't pretend ignorance of it, Harold. I am not a pretender and you know that well enough."

A painful pause ensued. Wayne was swallowing hard.

"If Jamison paid your expenses and you repaid him out of my money," he began, bewilderment again edging in on anger's domain as he realized that a guilty woman was hardly likely to repay such a debt the moment she could lay her hands on the amount.

Then he stared hard and broke out afresh:

"That check is for a trifle over two hundred and fifty dollars. A single week in the hospital would have nearly eaten up that much, what with two nurses and the biggest room in the place and specialists and all that. And you were there several weeks."

Wayne hastily rifled a handful of vouchers, glancing at each slip.

"No," he said, "there is no other check made out to this man Jamison." He opened the pass-book. "And you banked the whole sum I sent you, so you could not have paid him in cash."

"What are you driving at, man?" Betty demanded hotly.

He shook his head like an angry lion.

"Jamison or some other man paid your hospital bills," he shot back. "I have reason to believe it was this Jamison."

Betty made a depreciating gesture.

"Why should Mr. Jamison do such a thing, Harold Wayne?"

"Why should you have said you hadn't seen him for months, when you secretly sent him this check?" he retorted. "Why should you say this morning that there was absolutely nothing between you when you are close

enough to him to take his money?"

"It is true," she cried, dazedly, her mind beaten into dizziness by his torrent of words. "It is true, I tell you, it is true. All I said is true. Until this morning I had not seen Mr. Jamison for weeks, not since before I went to the hospital.

"Why, I haven't even heard from him since — since——" she paused with every sign of guilt.

"Since before you went to the hospital," her husband prompted, his lips dry and ashy pale.

"I — I didn't say that. At the hospital," she blundered on bravely. "I—I had a message from him. Dr. Hamilton gave me the message."

"And yet you said a few moments ago that Jamison did not pay your bills there, Betty. If he didn't, how did he happen to keep in touch with you? How did he know you were there? You went suddenly, you told me, without time to notify anyone. Yet Jamison knew you were there and kept sending messages to you through Dr. Hamilton."

From crimson the young wife's face had turned white.

"I don't know how he knew I was there," she sobbed. "I never thought about that until now. And he did not keep on sending me messages. He sent me one message. That was all."

Wayne's lips curled into a sneer.

"I suppose he sent word that you were not to worry over expenses, and that he would take care of them all, eh?"

"No. He said that I must not cheat him by dying," Betty replied her head lowered.

"That you must not—what?" he babbled in stark wonder.

"That I must get well for——'

"For his sake, eh?"

Her glance startled him.

"You are horrible, Harold Wayne. And you have the most wicked thoughts of any man I ever knew. Mr. Jamison wanted me to get well so I could pay him."

As she uttered the last words she broke into a flood of tears.

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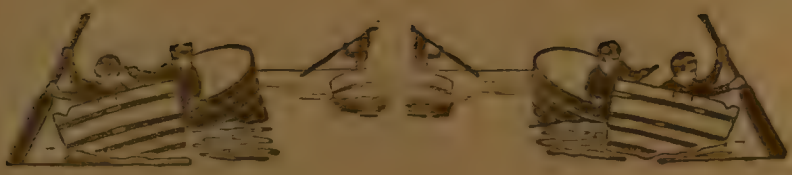

## Chapter 191

### THE OTHER MAN

WAYNE was looking in silent disgust at his weeping wife. Something — a glimmer, perhaps, of sanity, through his drunkenness of jealousy—told him she was speaking the truth. Then all at once his crazed brain leaped at the only plausible conclusion. What else could it be? Jamison had told her to get well so that she could pay him.

Hating himself for the foul query, yet unable to choke it back, he said:

"You—you got well. And you paid him?"

"I did," came back quickly.

"My God!"

It was a tortured cry that broke from Wayne's writhing lips.

His face went dusky purple, two white dents standing out in ludicrous contrast at either side of his nostrils and lips. She had told him the frightful truth without an instant's hesitation.

"You — you paid him!" he muttered, struggling with a sudden physical nausea.

"Yes," Betty answered, her indignation momentarily lost in a fright at his hideous face. "There is the check—it calls for two hundred and——"

"That check?" her husband shouted. "Why do you treat me as if I were a child? Isn't it enough to damn my life and your own soul, without insulting my intelligence, too? What has the check to do with it? Can't you be honest even now?"

"Honest? Why, I——"

"Deceptions form a splendid anchor in a marital storm!" he cried with withering scorn, "but I never heard that an anchor was of any special use in a shipwreck. And the ship is wrecked, Betty."

The latter lurched forward, then quickly steadied herself.

"Oh, I don't understand you!" The words broke from her lips in a hopeless wail. "I don't understand half you are saying. And what I do understand is so awful and so insulting that I can not understand why I stand here consenting to listen to it. Listen, Harold, don't you love me any more?"

"Love you?" he groaned. "God help me, that is the most damnable part of it all. I can't stop loving you —yet."

"Yet? What do you mean?" Her hand went out.

"Listen!" Wayne straightened himself up. "We will gain nothing by dragging in the holy name of love. Love is a god and you have blasphemed his name. Let us get down to bare facts, and perhaps we can come to some sort of conclusion.

"You admit," he went on doggedly, "that you have sold yourself. That is the main thing. What this check may mean doesn't matter any longer. It is a side issue now. I could have forgiven you anything but your lies. You have lied to me from the very start.

"I realize fully what I am up against. You kept from me all this matter of hospital expenses. You denied that you had any dealings with Jamison, and now, when you are driven into a corner you confess."

Betty was trembling in every limb.

"Confess?" she breathed. "Confess what?"

Her husband shrugged his shoulders disdainfully.

"Men of Jamison's type don't pay out big sums of money for a woman unless they are sure of payment.

And the payment is never made in money. That man is in love with you. He has always been in love with you ever since you let him put you on the stage.

"He hates me because I gave him to understand that he is not a welcome visitor in my house. But you always encouraged him. You defended him against me whenever we had an argument in which his name was mentioned.

"I knew more than you suspected, although I kept silent. You met him time and time again uptown and drove around with him in his car. You were seen, so there is no use denying it. You accepted his presents when I protested.

"And now he paid your hospital bills and he asked you to get well quickly so you could pay him back. Just think of it. He told you to get well so you could pay him!

"And now you tell me you paid him. You did not pay him with money. No doubt you gave him a latchkey and told him to call when he pleased, with the injunction to make sure that I was out when he called. You debased yourself and sold your——"

Betty sprang at him, her fingers crooked into claws.

"You beast!" she shrieked. "You unspeakable beast! I won't stay another minute in this same room with you. I won't stay in this same house with you! And—and you are the man I thought I loved—the man I was glad to starve and suffer for!"

"Starve and suffer?" Wayne snarled. "It is I who has done that so you could have your pretty clothes and all the luxuries this man Jamison got you accustomed to. Oh, yes, he spoiled you, and in more ways than one. He made you a——"

The young wife had suddenly drawn herself very erect. Her fingers pointed at the door.

"Go!" she said, her voice wickedly calm. "Go! If you don't, I think I shall kill you!"

"Yes," he assented, his smoldering eyes meeting hers for a moment of brooding reflection. "Yes, I'll go. I must be by myself for a while, to think out what is to be done."

He turned and walked from the room. He did not slam the door, but shut it slowly.

Betty stood still, a long time, just as he had left her.

She did not faint. She did not cry. She just stood still—very, very still.

The first definitely clear thought to shape itself in her mind was the realization that her husband had been too angry to slam the door.

More than once, of late, a clash on the eternal sickening theme of economy and his jealousy had ended in his stamping out of the apartment and banging the door shut with an impact that rattled the windows.

In the rush, as the first shock lessened, her husband's blind fury, his jealousy, his horrible insults, his disgusted contempt for herself, and his rank injustice, came back to Betty's memory.

He had spoken to her as she had believed no man could speak. He had accused her of evil that had never entered her heart.

He had reviled her grossly, insanely. He had beaten down with a hurricane of black words her attempts to defend herself and to explain.

The bitter injustice of it all cut into Betty's soul more deeply than the bald coarseness of her husband's insults.

Ever since they had known each other she had given him no real cause to doubt her. She had not looked at another man. She had not thought of another man.

She had slaved, she had humiliated herself, and she had repudiated her relatives and friends. She had given up a stage career that would have made her independently rich. All that she had done for Harold Wayne.

And this was her reward.

He had given her the lie, he had called her shameless, he had hinted broadly the most degrading thing—this man whom she had set upon a pedestal above all others.

She had done heroic deeds to prove worthy of his trust.

She had always been open and above board in everything she said and did.

Betty wished she could cry, but she felt no impulse for tears. Instead she found herself growing strangely calm, strangely analytical.

Her life lay about her in fragments, and she was studying these fragments before she thought to piece them together again into some semblance of their former beauty.

The most outstanding feature of it was that she saw her husband revealed — selfish, fiendishly jealous, unjust and foully abusive.

A cold hatred possessed her.

She would never willingly look again upon her husband who had wronged her by his abominable charges. He would probably stay away for at least a day or two, judging by her knowledge of him.

And to-morrow she would go back to Mrs. Armond, her one true and loyal and understanding friend. He would come back to find her gone. And her mind was already made up never to go back to him.

She knew she could support her child.

The way back to the stage was still open. Mr.

Jamison would help her as he had done before. She felt quite sure about that.

The same dead calm—which she did not recognize as apathy of stunned emotions rather than as a new state of mind—held Betty in its sway through the hours that followed.

She took her evening meal by herself and the baby was tucked away for the night.

Then she ransacked the closets and drawers, preparatory to packing her clothing.

Betty went at this task in a matter-of-fact way as if she were making ready for a holiday trip. Still amazed at her own utter calm and lack of emotion, she worked rapidly.

She sorted her possessions and her baby's, folding, discarding, classifying.

Even when she chanced to run across some particularly sacred little love relic or other, she laid it aside without a single heartache, as so much rubbish.

The clock had just struck nine when the doorbell rang.

Thinking that perhaps her husband had returned to make due apologies, she closed her lips tight, her mind framing a curt reply.

But the man who stood before her as she swung the door open, was not Harold Wayne.

It was Mr. Jamison!

This apparition was so absolutely outside of Betty's calculations, that she stood staring, speechless, dumbfounded.

"I had to come," said Mr. Jamison simply, by the way of greeting.

As she did not shut the door in his face, which he had feared she might, he stepped into the hallway and pushed the door shut behind him.

For an instant he and Betty stood there, facing each other.

It was the unexpected visitor who broke the pause.

"May I come in?" he asked.

"Why did you come here?" she countered.

"Because I wanted to see you, Betty," he answered gently. "But that is not the only reason. I have been horribly worried about you. Last night I dreamed that you needed my help—that you needed a true friend to advise you. That is why I came."

She said nothing in reply, but led the way into the sitting room, Mr. Jamison following her.

"My husband is not at home," she said as she sat down on the window seat cushions."

"I know he isn't," Jamison responded. "I saw him half an hour ago headed for Broadway. There was something in his face that frightened me. That is why I came. I wanted to speak to you—I must speak to you, Betty."

"Well?"

The monosyllable was almost indifferent.

A man whom she suspected of loving her had taken advantage of her husband's absence from home to call on her.

The strange situation did not even arouse a ripple of interest.

"I have been fighting for months to stay away from you," the millionaire said haltingly. "I could do it, too, as long as I thought you were happy. But you are not happy, you have not been happy for months. It breaks my heart to see you as you are now."

She faced him, her eyes tearfully brilliant.

"But I don't need anyone's sympathy," she declared rather ungraciously, thrilled, nevertheless, by the

vibrant tenderness in Mr. Jamison's deep voice. "You have no right——"

"Yes," he interrupted. "I have the right—not the right to intrude on you or annoy you, but I have the right to help you, to stand by you if you are in trouble—and you are troubled, whether you admit it or not."

She made a motion as to stop him, but he went hurriedly on:

"I have the right to serve you in any way in my power. And what is more, I am going to whether you want me to or not. I consider it a most sacred duty. Now will you listen to me for a moment? And I want you to listen without being offended."

Betty made no response.

The devotion in his every word and look stirred and fascinated her. It was balm to her numbed, crushed spirit.

Jamison had remained standing up to this moment. He did not wait to be asked to be seated, but reached for a chair and let himself down on it very slowly.

He viewed the young unhappy wife for a few seconds, then spoke.

"I love you," he said hopelessly. "I have always loved you since that fateful day that is a never-ending reproach to me. I shall always love you. But let that go. It can not interest you to hear it and it can not profit me to say it. I know that.

"When you fired that shot at me and told me how you hated me and despised me, I took it as my punishment. God, I would rather be struck by you than kissed by any other woman.

"And I was prepared to take as my punishment the loss of you, forever, out of my life. Do you think it was easy for me to know that you once had reason to

loath me and regard me as a beast?

"I bore all that, and I meant to further your happiness when you were married to the extent of giving every financial assistance to your husband.

"He made it very plain that my assistance in any way whatsoever, was not welcome. Well, I remained away because I did not want him to make you unhappy with his unreasonable jealousy.

"I wanted you to have the best of care when you were at the hospital because I knew that your husband was in financial straits and could not afford it.

"Whatever good I did for you both, and tried to do, I did because I loved you dearly. And I did not expect any reward.

"But I am not content that all the sacrifices I have made for you shall go for nothing and that you are unhappy and robbed of the precious thing a good wife and mother deserve.

"Something really serious has gone wrong between you and your husband. Now don't try to tell me that I am all wrong. I know far more than you think I do. I have been watching over you from a distance.

"I'll not see you suffer and shed tears when you deserve to be happy if ever a woman did. Whatever is wrong in your marital life, I mean to right it if I can."

Betty sat like a statue. She was thinking—thinking—thinking.

Jamison had told her he loved her. He—another man than her husband—had said: "I love you," to her, a wife.

And he had said it unrebuked.

His tone, caressing, soothing, infinitely tender, held all her attention. It confronted her strangely, her ears still ringing with her husband's fierce insults.

It was sweet to be petted after such nerversack

But there was something she wanted explained.

"The message," she said, her voice a trifle raised, "the message you sent me at the hospital. How could you have done it. How could you tell me not to cheat you by dying. It was brutal. Why, I was—I was dying."

"And you got my message and lived. It made you live," he said.

"Made me live?"

"Well, didn't it, Betty? Didn't it make you fight to get well so you could pay me—so you could clear yourself of the obligation to a man you detested at one time, to a man who was regarded by your husband as a menace to his home?"

She looked at him, open-mouthed.

Then very slowly, she began to understand. Link by link the chain of comprehension formed itself — the message's galvanic effect.

It was all true. She had misconstrued the purpose of the message. He had used these offending words because he knew it would make her fight to get well.

Gradually it all grew clear.

## Chapter 192

## UNSELFISH LOVE

BETTY WAYNE'S head was bowed until her chin almost touched her breast. With the dawn of understanding had come a sudden gush of gratitude, of appreciation for the touch of genius which had enabled Mr. Jamison to hit on the one motive that could make her fight her way back to life.

There had been nothing selfish about that. The question of being repaid had never entered his mind.

"Why did you insist upon paying my expenses in the hospital?" she asked presently.

"Because I wanted to," he smiled a trifle wistfully. "Because I wanted you to have the very best of care. Do you think I would have let you take any chances with your precious young life?"

"You must let me pay you back," Betty said earnestly.

"I am paid a hundredfold. Please say no more about it."

"But I must, Mr. Jamison. I can't be under such a debt. I—I— haven't thanked you yet. I want to do so now with all my heart. And all the money payment can not wipe out my indebtedness to you."

The millionaire made a deprecatory gesture.

"Nonsense," he muttered, apparently ill at ease. "I only——"

"You only proved yourself my friend in the best sense of the word," the young Mrs. Wayne broke in. "You proved yourself my only friend when I needed a

friend more than ever before. I see it now. It was you who was behind everything.

"And you said not a word about it. To-day, I have seen all that is worst and all that is best in a man. To-night, I think I am seeing all that is best and most true. And I loved him and felt bitter toward you for sending me a message I so basely misconstrued."

Jamison regarded her for a long moment without speaking.

Finally he said:

"From your action and remarks I take it that you have had a serious quarrel with your husband. That must be straightened out. You must let me help you, dear."

Though the tears Betty had longed for still refused to flow, yet this man's appeal went straight to her bruised heart, sweeping away her last barrier of reserve.

"Oh, why did you bring me back to life—when it —when it was all over," she moaned brokenly. "Why didn't you let me go to sleep? I have been so unhappy for a long time.

"My husband's jealousy almost drove me mad. Before you came I had a terrible scene with him. But all is over now between us.

"And now, I don't think I can ever be happy again. Something has died here!" She pressed her clenched hand to her left breast. "All the world seems a strange place to me. I must begin everything over again, and alone."

"You shall never be alone," Jamison declared. "Never, while I live. I don't know what has happened, and I don't want to know, unless you feel like telling me. All I want to do is to help you, and to make right what has gone wrong between you and your husband. Tell me what to do."

Betty shook her head despairingly.

"There is nothing to do," she said sadly. "There is nothing anyone can do. The whole past died, all at once. And I am in a new world. Until you came here to-night, I didn't think I had anyone to look to for a word of comfort.

"And that it should be you of all people — you, whom I have misjudged so and been so ungrateful to. Won't you forgive me?"

"Forgive you?" he echoed. "Why, Betty, I — I love you."

"Love me?" she repeated dazedly. "But you must not. You can't, because it is wrong."

"There is nothing wrong in a love that wants to give all and that asks nothing in return," he defended himself. "There is nothing wrong in a love that is content to wade through hell in order to give you a chance to be happy.

"That is the way I love you—and it is the only way I must always love you. You don't care for me—I don't expect you to—but you can't keep me from caring for you as long as there is a breath left in my body.

"And you can't keep me from devoting my whole life to your service. You can't do it, Betty, no matter how hard you try.

"I am not the man I once was, and if there is a sin in that kind of love, then Heaven is full of sinners. My love for you is the cleanest, noblest thing that ever came into my whole worthless life."

She had been listening as to music.

Her heart went out to this man in a feeling of the most sublime friendship that stilled its ache.

"You — you are not angry with me?" he asked, humbly.

"Angry with you?" the woman breathed. "No.

No. Such a love honors me more than anything else that is left. And I am more grateful to you for it than I could be for anything else in the wide world. I want you to know that, Mr. Jamison."

The latter smiled hopefully.

"Would it do you any good to tell me what has gone wrong between you and your husband?" he inquired very tenderly. "I am not putting this question merely to satisfy a morbid curiosity."

She looked at him, her misty eyes filled with pain.

"I am going to leave him. That's all."

"Going to leave him?" he stared, incredulous.

"Yes," the young wife continued, trying to keep her voice steady. "I can not stand his horrible jealousy any longer. To-night, when I tried to explain a few things, he wouldn't believe me. He said things I could never forget.

"He flatly accused me of being — oh, you know what I mean. He said plainly that I was not fit to be his wife, and——"

"What?" broke in Jamison, dumbfounded and raging. "Not fit to be his wife. The beast!"

"Don't call him that," pleaded Betty.

"That name does not fit him!" he went on, white with anger. "He is worse than a swine. Why, he was never fit to touch the hem of your skirt. And—go ahead, and tell me the rest, Betty. I am sorry I lost control of myself.

"Does he realize all you have tried to do for him? From the day you came to me to get help for him, I have known how you loved him. And the idiot is jealous. He —he——"

"You are mistaken. I don't love him," she cut in.

"Certainly you do, my dear child. No wife would do for her husband what you have done for him, unless

she loved him."

"I don't!" Betty insisted. "I don't love him, and I never can again. Oh, I know I have no right to be saying such things to anyone, but it is true. I can't live with him any more. I am going away to-morrow morning."

"Going away?" the millionaire stared at her. "Where?"

"Well, I haven't made up my mind as yet. I am going, however, to leave this house. I am strong again and I can work. Perhaps I may go back on the stage."

"Stage! Work!" Mr. Jamison spit out the words with utmost vehemence. "You are far too delicate to attempt anything of the sort."

She nodded her head repeatedly.

"I am stronger than you think. I can take care of myself. I haven't had time to make any plans."

Jamison was utterly at a loss what to say.

He coaxed Betty to tell him in detail what had happened to force her to such a conclusion.

The sorry consolation of putting her tragedy into words swept away Betty's hesitation.

Almost before she knew it, she found herself telling him the gist of her quarrel with Wayne.

And womanlike, she unconsciously softened the brutality of her husband and minimized the insults he had heaped upon her.

Yet, even in its modified form, the recital stirred Jamison to burning indignation and to a yearning to kick Wayne from his home all the way to the battery.

To his highly sensitized imagination, there was nothing strange in the fact that Wayne's insane and brutal behavior had killed so delicately nurtured a flower as Betty's love.

The entire situation in all its crude grimness was plain to him, in spite of the young wife's many omissions

and the softening of the harsh words.

"And it was because of me," he said, when at last he could trust himself to speak. "I brought it all on you —I, who would gladly have died to make you happy. The blundering things I tried to do for you have only succeeded in breaking your heart and smashing your life."

She shook her head energetically.

"You must not say that," she replied in all earnestness. "It isn't so. You meant everything for the best and——."

"Hell is white with the skulls of idiots who meant everything for the best!" he interrupted her bitterly. "I have broken up your home as thoroughly as if I were a melodrama villian, instead of being just a poor dub that loves you and wanted to help you. Can I do anything to square matters?"

Again Betty shook her head.

"There is nothing left to square. Everything is over between Wayne and myself."

"I could go to your husband and show him where he has made a mistake," the millionaire suggested. "I am not afraid to face him and make him listen to reason, too. I can do that much."

"What is the use?" Betty asked wearily. "What good would that do."

"Good God, he is not——"

She silenced him.

"Even if he believed you—and you may rest assured that he won't—if he wanted me back, I couldn't go back to him. That is dead. What he said about me and what he believes about me would always stand between us.

"We would never be happy again, and I could never love him again. He couldn't love me, either."

Continued in next number

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